

*News from the*

**U.S. Senate Committee on  
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions**

**Michael B. Enzi (Wyoming), Chairman**



**For Immediate Release**

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**Tuesday, January 31, 2006**

## **Enzi Continues Work to Put Senate Confirmed Leaders at Helm of Mine, Workplace Safety Agencies**

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Washington, D.C. - Saying the loss of 14 men in the darkness of the Sago and Alma mines in West Virginia has brought “a great light to bear on mine safety,” U.S. Sen. Mike Enzi (R- WY), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee) today pledged that the Senate will continue its work to make mines safer by putting “solid and experienced” leaders in charge of the federal agencies overseeing mine and workplace safety.

“The accidents of the past few weeks have brought together labor, industry, and legislators on the local, state, and national levels, all determined to make the changes that are needed to make our mines as safe as they can possibly be,” Enzi said Tuesday, during a confirmation hearing for the President’s nominees for Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA), Edwin Foulke, and Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health (MSHA), Richard Stickler.

“It is essential that both of these important agencies have experienced and permanent leadership. At present, neither has the benefit of a Senate-confirmed administrator,” Enzi said. He pledged to work with HELP Committee members and other interested Senators to draft legislation aimed at improving mine safety.

Last year, the total number of coal mine fatalities was 22 - the lowest ever recorded, according to the Department of Labor. The injury rate in the coal mining industry was also the lowest on record in 2004. Enzi cited the low numbers as evidence that the industry has made strides improving and promoting workplace safety, but maintained that the mining industry can and must industry do better.

“After visiting West Virginia and meeting with the families of the Sago Mine disaster, I believe we have a duty to investigate the technology and innovations developed by federal agencies like NASA, and the work being done by the Department of Homeland Security, to provide first responders the tools they need to immediately begin rescue efforts when miners lives are at risk,” Enzi added. “At the very least, it means using available technologies that may be able to locate miners and send them life-saving communications.”

On Jan. 20, Enzi and the HELP Committee’s Ranking Member Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA), and Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) traveled to West Virginia to meet with the families of Sago Mine workers as well as officials of the International Coal Group (ICG) and MSHA.

Enzi said he will thoroughly investigate how new technologies can be developed to improve radio communications between mine workers, rescue teams, and officials above ground and how technology can help extend the supplies of life saving oxygen miners rely on following an explosion or cave ins.

Coal is vital to the economy of Enzi’s home state of Wyoming, which is the largest producer of coal in the nation. Wyoming’s surface coal mining industry ships an average of one million tons of coal a day.

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